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3 May 1967

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Probable Reactions to a Manipulation of the US Bombing Program

1. Assumption:

After striking all, or most, of the targets in ROLLING THUNDER target package 56, the US will suspend attacking targets north of the 20th Parallel and confine ROLLING THUNDER to targets south of that line.

2. Questions:

- a) What would be the likely North Vietnamese reaction to such a US move?
- b) Would there be any political advantage to informing the U Russians privately that such a move was intended?
- c) Would there be any political advantage to informing the North Vietnamese?

3. Comments:

a) The 20th Parallel runs just north of Thanh Hoa and, in effect, separates Tonkin from that portion of Annam which lies within the DRV (i. e., separates the Red River Delta area from the rest of North Vietnam). Thus, if we attack targets south of the 20th Parallel we would still be attacking targets in almost half of North Vietnam.

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b) If the bombing is confined to targets south of the 20th Parallel there will be absolutely no impediment or hindrance to the flow of supplies from Communist China into North Vietnam. Furthermore, judging from their past performance, the North Vietnamese will soon repair damage inflicted north of the 20th Parallel on installations they consider it essential to repair. These repair efforts would be greatly facilitated by the absence of further aerial interdiction.

c) In recent months the North Vietnamese line has been that Hanoi could not consider entering into negotiations without a complete cessation of the bombing of North Vietnamese territory. The plan outlined above would not meet this condition.

d) To our eyes it might appear that we were meeting Hanoi halfway; hence, if the North Vietnamese were serious about wanting negotiations, they should be prepared to compromise. The North Vietnamese, however, would probably not view matters in this light. Instead, they would probably feel that domestic and international pressures had forced the US to curtail its bombing program. If the Lao Dong Politburo reasons thus, it could well conclude that if Hanoi remains adamant, such pressures will eventually force the US to suspend the bombing altogether.

4. On the question of whom we should inform and what political advantage we might gain thereby, the following points should be kept in mind:

a) If the US aerial attacks are confined to targets south of the 20th Parallel, this fact will soon become evident to everyone interested in the Vietnamese war.

b) The thought is abroad that the Soviets are honest brokers in the quest for peace, that they are concerned about the Vietnam war and would like to see it stopped because they fear it is prejudicing the US/USSR detente and contains unacceptable risks of a conflict between the US and the USSR, which is not in Soviet interests. Such a belief is founded more on faith than fact or demonstrable evidence. Though counsels are probably as divided in Moscow as they are in Washington, the overriding determinant of Soviet policy will be that the Soviets cannot afford to be put in the position where the Soviet Union appears to be selling out a fraternal Socialist state engaged in armed conflict with a capitalist aggressor. There is little political advantage to be gained by privately

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informing the Soviets in the hope that we will thus gain merit in Moscow and that Moscow will inform Hanoi and encourage Hanoi to be forthcoming.

c) If we tell anyone, it would be better if we ourselves informed both the North Vietnamese and the Soviets. The best political scenario would be for us to privately advise the North Vietnamese (through their diplomatic mission in Moscow, Rangoon, Djakarta, or any other capital in which we are both represented) that in our unending quest for an honorable peace we have decided to continue our aerial attacks to infiltration-associated targets in southern North Vietnam in the hope that this may improve the climate for private, serious discussions. After this is accomplished we could then tell the Soviets not only that we plan to restrict our bombing to targets located south of the 20th Parallel, but also that we have already advised the North Vietnamese of this fact through our own channels.

O/DCI/SAVA:GACarver/mee

Orig & 1 - DCI (w/map attachment) *Indef file*

1 - ~~Aerial Pressure file~~

1 - ~~DCI Special Projects file~~

1 - GAC Chrono ✓

1 - ~~VAS Chrono~~

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The Director

GACarver, Jr.

Probable Reactions to a Manipulation of the
US Bombing Program

Attached is a note on the problem you raised
yesterday (2 May), done in blind memorandum
form.

FBI: Discreet inquiries indicate that as of
1800 last night, Phuc Yen airfield was stricken
from the target package and that the whole package
was being redrawn.

George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment